

Proposed Minutes
Child Services Oversight Committee
Tuesday, September 9th, 2014, 1:00PM to 2:30PM
Indiana State House, Room 233

Members present: Senator Carlin Yoder; Doris Tolliver, Chief of Staff, Department of Child Services (in place of Mary Beth Bonaventura, Director, Department of Child Services); Leslie Dunn, Indiana CASA Director, Division of State Court Administration, Indiana Supreme Court; Sean McCrindle, Vice President of Program Operations, Bashor Children's Home; Suzanna O'Malley, Prosecuting Attorney Council; Representative Gail Riecken; Jolene Bracale, Program Coordinator for Student Health, Department of Education; Larry Landis, Executive Director, Indiana Public Defender Council; Senator John Broden.

Members absent: Hon. Christopher Burnham, Morgan Superior Court 2; Representative Kevin Mahan.

Guest Presenters: Leslie Dunn, GAL/CASA. Division of State Court Administration; James Wide, Deputy Director of Communications; Jane Bisbee, Deputy Director of Field Operations, Department of Child Services; Lindsey Craig, Family Policy Director, Governor's Office; Senator John Broden.

Commission Staff present: Dalton Thieneman, State Senate.

1. Welcome. Sen. Yoder welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded everyone to turn on their microphones because it's being streamed live.

The floor was then opened for introductions.
2. Approval of May 8, 2014 minutes. Sen. Yoder asked the committee for their vote of approval for the May 8, 2014 minutes. The committee members unanimously voted to approve the minutes.
3. Overview of Indiana Court of Appointed Special Advocated Program. Leslie Dunn, Indiana State CASA Director

Ms. Dunn presented an overview of the CASA program. She wanted to address some misconceptions about the program by explaining their mission. The Indiana State office of CASA is administered by the Indiana Supreme Court, Division of State Court Administration. Ms. Dunn noted that the budget consists of 2.9 million dollars and 91% of that goes toward 77 counties across the state of Indiana. She explained that CASA has added 12 new programs in the last seven years. The programs that are funded are given a matching grant in which the counties match the funds provided by CASA. Ms. Dunn stated that the smallest possible grant is \$2,000, but most counties contribute significantly more than the matching grant.

The mission of the Indiana State Office of GAL/CASA is to ensure that the best interests of abused and neglected children are represented in court. The office supports the development, growth, and continuation of county programs that recruit and train volunteers and staff to serve as Court Appointed Special Advocate and Guardians Ad Litem. The office promotes and supports quality representation for children to provide each child a safe,

permanent, nurturing home. The Indiana State Office of GAL/CASA is administered by the Indiana Supreme Court, Division of State Court Administration, and distributes matching funds, as appropriated by the Indiana General Assembly to certified county GAL/CASA volunteer programs.

A Court Appointed Special Advocate volunteer is a trained member of the community who is appointed by a judge to lift up a child's voice in court. Children who are advocated for by GAL/CASA volunteers are victims of abuse and neglect. As case workers, attorneys and other adults come and go in their lives, these children desperately need one adult to stay with them for the entire length of the court case. The CASA volunteer visits the child, gets to know the child and advocates for each child's particular needs until the case is resolved. GAL/CASA volunteers spend one-on-one time with children involved in the court process sufficient to provide fact-based information to the court. A CASA volunteer makes a difference in the life of a child one child at a time.

Independent national research identified the effectiveness of CASA volunteers involved in CHINS and TPR cases. Among their findings they reported that children with a CASA volunteer are less likely to spend time in long-term foster care, are less likely to re-enter the foster care system and have more services ordered for both the child and family. Like attorneys, social workers have many cases to monitor at one time. The CASA volunteer, who serves on the average of 2 children or cases at one time, does not replace the DCS case manager but rather works in conjunction with DCS and the court to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and families.

4. DCS Hotline Screening Process. Jane Bisbee, Deputy Director of Field Operations, Department of Child Services

Indiana State Law states any individual who believes a child may be a victim of abuse or neglect shall contact the Indiana Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline or law enforcement. The central contact number is 1-800-800-5556, but there are hotline staff in 5 locations across the state: Marion, Saint Joseph, Blackford, Lawrence and Vanderburg. The hotline is open twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. Intake specialists are staffed by the hotline to answer calls alleging child abuse and neglect. Each has the same educational background, experience and education as a family case manager. Additionally, each has received additional training in areas such as domestic violence, suicide and substance abuse that provide a comprehensive representation of the allegations.

After a prompt, you will be connected to an intake specialist who will ask questions regarding the allegations. If a child is in imminent danger you should call 911 before contacting the Hotline. A caller is not required to give a name, phone number or any identifying information; however, providing such information can be helpful to the Family Case Manager who may respond to your call. The Intake specialist will ask you questions about the current

circumstances to assess the child's current safety, then broader questions about the child/family/home. After collecting your responses, the IS will complete an official intake report. A thorough review of any known history with the family is completed at that time and is included in the report. According to Indiana law, certain criteria must be met before the Family Case Manager, can be dispatched to a home. Additionally, DCS has put policies and procedures in place to protect families from unnecessary intervention. If the allegations meet any or all of those standards, a Family Case Manager in the county will be assigned to complete a thorough assessment of the merits of the allegations. Reports are sent to the local county Family Case Manager on timeframes for response outlined by state law. Even if the allegations presented do not meet the criteria outlined above for assignment, the IS can refer the caller to prevention services and resources within the community to assist the family.

We also wanted to speak to where there can be improves in the hotline. DCS and the state of Indiana need the eyes and ears in the community. The quality of the reports and information provided overall are critical for us to effectively do our job. We want to drive this point home. The more and better information we have the better informed we are to do our jobs.

5. Discussion about Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting. James Wide, DCS Deputy Director of Communications

This week, the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) launched an online informational training course available to the public, which focuses on preventing and reporting child abuse. In 2011, Indiana recorded an alarming 151,442 reports of child abuse. Sadly, each year since, the number of reports has continued to increase with 177,539 in 2012, and 187,465 in 2013. The new, much-needed training program will educate Hoosiers on how to recognize and report child abuse and neglect in Indiana. Participants will also learn the steps taken after DCS receives a report. In 2012, lawmakers expanded the DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline to include five new call centers throughout the state. With the increase in caseworkers, phone wait times have significantly decreased. Caseworkers are required to be trained family case managers with college degrees. The DCS hotline does not require the caller to provide their name or contact information, but that information could help in some circumstances. All Hoosiers, especially school teachers, nurses, counselors and principals, are strongly encouraged to go the DCS website and complete the training course. The course takes roughly an hour to finish. If there are any suspicions or reasons to believe a child is being abused, make the call to 1-800-800-5556. As adults, we are responsible for the safety of all children. Remember, no child will benefit from an adult's silence.

6. Overview of Adoption Study Committee. Lindsey Craig, Governor's Office

Ms. Craig presented a brief overview of the Adoption Study Committee created by House Bill 1222. The legislature created the study committee responsible with improving adoption programs, specifically the legal and regulatory costs of such programs. The committee

has been appointed for fiscal year 2016 and will focus on adoption awareness by allowing public testimony. If you are interesting in attending or presenting to the committee, email: adoptionstudycommittee@gov.in.gov.

7. Future Meeting Topics.

- a. Review of DCS Ombudsman Report, Alfreda Singleton-Smith

8. Future Meeting Dates.

- a. "Thank you to all in attendance for your time and efforts. Our next meeting will focus on the committee's recommendations for legislation next session. Our next meeting will be scheduled by the committee's schedule in early January. We have addressed some issues we need to focus on and there are definitely strides we need to take. With that, thank you again for serving on the committee and have a great rest of the afternoon." - Chairman Yoder